

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-15. **(Canceled)**

16. (New) A method for detecting a level of awareness of a vehicle driver by monitoring a steering behavior of the vehicle driver and evaluating a phase profile between a change in a steering angle ( $\beta$ ) of at least one steerable wheel of a vehicle and a change in a steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) of a steering wheel of the vehicle, the method comprising:

Determining a first  $t_1$ , wherein the change in the steering angle ( $\beta$ ) begins at the first time  $t_1$ ;

determining a second time  $t_2$ , wherein the change in the steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) begins at the second time  $t_2$  and the second time  $t_2$  follows the first time  $t_1$ ;

determining a third time  $t_3$ , wherein the vehicle driver starts to bring about compensation by actuation of the steering wheel at the third time  $t_3$ ; and

evaluating a gradient of the steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) during a time interval from the second time  $t_2$  to the third time  $t_3$  for detecting the level of awareness of the vehicle driver.

17. (New) A method for detecting the level of awareness of a vehicle driver by monitoring a steering behavior of the vehicle driver and evaluating a phase profile between a change in a steering angle ( $\beta$ ) of at least one steerable wheel of a vehicle and a change in a steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) of a steering wheel of the vehicle, the

method comprising:

determining a first time  $t_1$ , wherein the change in the steering angle ( $\beta$ ) begins at the first time  $t_1$ ;

determining a second time  $t_2$ , wherein the change in the steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) begins at the second time  $t_2$  and the second time  $t_2$  follows the first time  $t_1$ ;

determining a third time  $t_3$ , wherein the vehicle driver starts to bring about compensation by actuation of the steering wheel at the third time  $t_3$ ; and

comparing a gradient of the steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) with a gradient of the steering angle ( $\beta$ ) to detect the level of awareness of the vehicle driver.

18. (New) The method according to Claim 16, wherein the gradient of the steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) is compared with at least one predefinable limiting value.

19. (New) The method according to Claim 16, wherein a frequency of exceeding of the at least one limiting value is monitored over a predefinable time interval.

20. (New) The method according to Claim 17, wherein a frequency of exceeding of the at least one limiting value is monitored over a predefinable time interval.

21. (New) The method according to Claim 18, further comprising:

triggering at least one action at a predefinable approximation to the at least one predefinable limiting value, at an exceeding of the at least one limiting value or at a frequency of exceeding of the at least one predefinable limiting value.

22. (New) The method according to Claim 21, wherein the at least one action is an automatic steering intervention.

23. (New) The method according to Claim 21, wherein the at least one action is at least one acoustic, visual or haptic indication.
24. (New) The method according to Claim 16, further comprising:  
triggering at least one action which is graded as a function of a detected level of awareness.
25. (New) The method according to Claim 17, further comprising:  
triggering at least one action which is graded as a function of a detected level of awareness.
26. (New) The method according to Claim 16, further comprising:  
evaluating an angular position or a rotational speed of a rotor of a servomotor of an electric steering assistance means and an angular position of a steering column to determine the steering angle ( $\beta$ ) and the steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ).
27. (New) The method according to Claim 17, further comprising:  
evaluating an angular position or a rotational speed of a rotor of a servomotor of an electric steering assistance means and an angular position of a steering column to determine the steering angle ( $\beta$ ) and the steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ).
28. (New) The method according to Claim 16, further comprising:  
evaluating a steering torque of an electric steering assistance means to determine the change of the steering angle ( $\beta$ ) and the steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ).
29. (New) The method according to Claim 17, further comprising:  
evaluating a steering torque of an electric steering assistance means to

determine the change of the steering angle ( $\beta$ ) and the steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ).

30. (New) An apparatus for detecting a level of awareness of a vehicle driver and a phase profile between a change in a steering angle ( $\beta$ ) of at least one steerable wheel of a vehicle and a change in a steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) of a steering wheel of the vehicle, the apparatus comprising:

at least one sensing device which detects a steering behavior of a vehicle;

means for determining a first time  $t_1$ , wherein the change in the steering angle ( $\beta$ ) begins at the first time  $t_1$ ;

means for determining a second time  $t_2$ , wherein the change in the steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) begins at the second time  $t_2$  and the second time  $t_2$  follows the first time  $t_1$ ;

means for determining a third time  $t_3$ , wherein the vehicle driver starts to bring about compensation by actuation of the steering wheel at the third time  $t_3$ ; and

means for generating a signal which corresponds to the level of awareness of the vehicle driver by evaluation of a gradient of the steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) during a time interval from the second time  $t_2$  to the third time  $t_3$ .

31. (New) An apparatus for detecting a level of awareness of a vehicle driver and a phase profile between a change in a steering angle ( $\beta$ ) of at least one steerable wheel of a vehicle and a change in a steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) of a steering wheel of the vehicle, the apparatus comprising:

at least one sensing device which detects a steering behavior of a vehicle;

mean for determining a first time  $t_1$ , wherein the change in the steering angle ( $\beta$ )

begins at the first time  $t_1$ ;

means for determining a second time  $t_2$ , wherein the change in the steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) begins at the second time  $t_2$  and the second time  $t_2$  follows the first time  $t_1$ ;

means for determining a third time  $t_3$ , wherein the vehicle driver starts to bring about compensation by actuation of the steering wheel at the third time  $t_3$ ; and

means for generating a signal which corresponds to the level of awareness by comparison of a gradient of the steering-wheel angle ( $\alpha$ ) with a gradient of the steering angle ( $\beta$ ).